

Introspected

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The dichotomy between expression and interpretation allows communication to happen. Communication is a sensual experience. I approach art as a visual language and I use intuitive constructions of carved wood, engraved acrylic, and light projections as an expression of a personal interpretation of the introspected internal dialogue between my mind, my hands, my eyes, and the materials. The hand is an extension of the mind and the materials are an extension of the hand. As an artist I use the relationship between mind and hand to give physical form to ephemeral streams of thought. This body of work attempts to use the dichotomy of internal versus external that is woven into the human condition, as I understand it, through the construction of wooden armatures that fuse with scribed, shaped clear acrylic plastic forms. Clear acrylic that has been scribed by an engraving burin is melted and mounted onto the wooden armatures. Heating the acrylic softens it and allows for it to bend to the contours of the wooden structures the result is a drawing that has been transformed from a two-dimensional image to a three-dimensional object thus, the image exists in a physical space not an imitated or simulated space.

*Introspected* (detail) figure 1





The wooden and acrylic structures are either hung on a wall or attached to another structure which allows the overall total structure to venture even further from the wall and project physically into space. The scribed clear acrylic forms are illuminated by spotlights that cause the scribed line to cast shadows on the wall behind the wooden and acrylic forms. Shadows from the wooden armatures mingle with the shadows of the scribed acrylic. Images interact with visual senses and express to the viewer an internal dialogue of interpretation. The inspired internal dialogue is determined by a system of marks made by my hand that work together to divulge a simulated space, emotion, meaning, and thought.

The engraved drawings are free flowing streams of consciousness that introspect the chthonic layers of perception before the conception of representation and notion of form. It is the area of the mind that is non-objective, un-representational. The drawings begin as completely non-objective weaving Surrealist inspired forms that transform into hands and eventually a human figure.

*Introspected* (detail) figure 2



Through this investigation of the human condition I have a growing awareness that the most persistent influence on my perceptions is my relationships with people around me, much like Oldrich Kulhanek who uses his personal experiences during the Soviet occupation of the Czech Republic as catalyst in his lithographs of the human figure. In order to construct the image I must build it from its parts, mark-by-mark and element-by-element as I attempt to embrace some form automatism. Andre Masson's automatic attempts at Automatic drawing are a direct influence on me, however, I discovered, as Masson discovered that it is impossible to draw completely I cannot turn my mind off because there will always be a matrix of precedence influencing my decisions.

*Job* Oldrich Kulhanek figure 3



My interest is to break down perception and to interpret that interaction in its parts in an attempt to inspire in the viewer their own intuitive impulses. Gestalt theory says that the sum of the parts is greater than the whole and recognizes an automatic organizing tendency in human nature that constructs parts into a whole. As an artist I must reverse the tendency of organizing the parts into the whole and understand my inspirations in their components and then give physical form to my inspirations mark by mark. What influences this instinct in the artist? I respond to the variety of apparatuses that construct my perception, being, and experience. It is the internal visual image that informs my art making process with influences derived from a variety of external forces. Some levels that I am aware of and some levels that are elusive to what I am capable of understanding. A piece of art is often seen in its entirety but as I construct a piece of art with each mark and become intimate with every detail it reinforces my understanding of the complexities and multiplicities that construct my overall experiences.

Gabriel Orozco embraces the notion of Gestalt theory in one of the pieces that he exhibited in the Museum of Modern Art in New York. In this piece he deconstructed, literally, a Volkswagen Bug into individual parts and suspended each individual part from the ceiling. The presentation of each components being separated from the whole prevented me from immediately identifying the work of art as a car. Only after a more intense investigation did I understand that it was indeed a car.

*Wonder* Gabriel Orozco figure 4



The shadows are created from the diffusion of light as it passes through the scribed acrylic. The shadows are drawings that have abandoned the mimetic approach of imitating light through the use of a drawing media. The image is perceptible from the direct reaction of light and not a recreation of light onto a two-dimensional surface. More significantly the projection of light causes the shadow. It is through the illumination of light that the engraved image becomes more visible than if it were not illuminated.

*Introspected* (detail) figure 5



What type of internal discourse is roused with the reversal of the image from imitated light to the reaction of light? As far as visual language is concerned Fernande Saint – Martin writes on the perception of an image, “In a certain sense, the basic element of the visual language can be only a psychophysical entity defined by both the subjective and objective aspects of a percept” (Saint –Martin p.4) The duality of internal versus external realities can be dissected by the differences in sensation. External forces are sensed while internal forces are a binary of the digestion of external forces and the simultaneity that weaves a collective memory, an area of the mind that exists in the realm that reciprocates the conception of the image. The engraved drawing is a physical and sculptural form that excites both visual and tactile senses. It maintains its physicality. As

the spotlight gazes into the clear acrylic the light is diffused by the scribed mark. Particles of light create a visual sense but cannot be touched. The shadow has no physicality and is a representation of the internal diffusion of external forces. The gaze of the spotlight is evidence of conscious introspection.

Through the process of drawing I am forced to visualize an image or an idea in its parts, its details. Beginning with the conception of the idea or the mental vision of an image I must first understand the structural components of the image and build the image with every stroke of my hand. Walter Benjamin wrote, "All representation rests on making present what is not present" (Allert p.230). Scribing the acrylic is done with an engraving burin one line at a time. I begin by choosing where the first line is engraved. Formal devices and aesthetic systems of design, which I have learned throughout my education, influence me but more significantly the influence is an occurrence of exchanged relations between image and the act of allowing experiences to cite experiences. (Allert p.235) After the first mark is made each mark is a record of thought processes, imagination, and impulses, taken from my visual memory. The engraved drawings are free flowing streams of consciousness that introspect the chthonic layers of perception before the conception of representation and notion of form. It is the area of the mind that is non-objective, un-representational.

The argument that Derrida suggests is writing comprehends language. The argument that I suggest is that art comprehends visual language. Derrida distinguishes speech from writing and includes art in that category of writing. Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience. Then is art a visual language or a visual writing? I see art,

as a means of communicating what language cannot. If spoken words are the symbols of mental experience then can art be an image or a vision of mental experience.

The image develops and the abstract shapes inspire signification. Individual marks start to respond to one another and parts begin to construct shapes. Shapes begin to excite my imagination, and introspection begins to construct non-objective and abstract forms that transform in to hands and the human figure. In essence, marks become the sum of the parts, and the sum of the parts becomes a configuration of fragments. The abstract shapes are ultimately a stream of signifiers that remain in flux. As each signifier is a simultaneous reaction to the multitude of signifiers that occurred before it and during it. Consequently, experiences are a convergence of multiple layers of perceptions that occur simultaneously. Jacques Derrida wrote in Of Grammatology “Signifier of the signifier’ describes in the contrary the movement of language: in its origin, to be sure, but one can already suspect an origin whose structure can be expressed as ‘signifier of the signifier’ conceals and erases itself in its own production. There the signified always already functions as a signifier” (Derrida p.7). I have always assumed that the detail was a signifier and the whole the signified. However the argument that the whole and its parts are essentially referential to the same degree points to a series of signifiers. Therefore, the parts do not construct the whole because the whole does not exist. There are only parts referring to other parts.

It is important that I distinguish between representing the internal aspects of perception and external aspects of perception. The result is a three-dimensional approach to constructing an image. If the image remained on a two-dimensional surface then the



physicality of the external would not and could not be captured. The image in two dimensions would only be the illusion of physicality and not actual physicality and would be interpreted as such.

*Introspected* (detail) figure 6



The wooden armatures are bent and laminated strips of poplar have been carved and shaped. The shapes of the wooden sticks resemble bones but are not necessarily meant to be interpreted as bones. They are a result of an exchange of relations. During the carving of the wood I am aware of their utilitarian function, their relationship with structure. The awareness of structure influences me as each bit of wood is carved off. My internal dialogue and mind's eye fixate on the structural elements of the human body, bones. The resulting bone-like shape is my own interpretation from the influences of the idea of structure. The carved wooden sticks are assembled so that when the acrylic is mounted onto to the wooden structures the acrylic sits off of the wall and the acrylic is fused and melted into the structure of the carved wooden shapes. As the wooden structures allow the engraved acrylic to exist free of the wall it also creates physical



layers. The shadow that is cast onto the wall, the shadow that is cast onto the wooden structure, the wooden structure, and the engraved acrylic are all different layers existing on different levels of space and interacting with the eye differently. As each layer interacts with the eye it excites a different set of interpretations. The physicality of the wood possesses its own visual language and is interpreted differently from the clear glass-like acrylic. There are contexts that are inherent in their forms and material and the way that I have manipulated that material emits a specific language.

Scribing an image into the clear plastic acrylic with an engraving burin causes the transparent nature of the acrylic to become a screen that diffuses light to create the shadow. The result is a drawing existing on different levels, one level being the physically engraved line in the acrylic and the second image being a reaction of the light being diffused by the drawing. In the same regard that external forces are projected onto my consciousness and are diffused into an internal dialogue of perception. As the numbers of lights are increased the diffusion of the light is multiplied and the shadow diffuses even further, even to the point that it does not resemble the drawing that is engraved into the acrylic. Essentially becoming the interaction of internal forces and external forces multiplied, varying and simultaneous.

Contemporary art has also embraced a pluralistic attitude in the way that artists are making art currently. Developments in technology have influenced a visual culture in contemporary society. The development of clear acrylic is a direct reaction to society's need to interact with the environment visually. The visual languages of contemporary artists influence me more than their theoretical or conceptual approaches.

Gregory Euclide uses melted acrylic in combination with de-constructed acrylic paintings to comment on society's idealization of industrial development and the idealization of the nature and the landscape. His use of the melted acrylic speaks visually of its utilitarian function but also its persistent role to separate people from the outdoor environment.

My concern is connecting with the plurality and poly-systemic environment of the current human condition. I am interested in questions that differentiate between varying levels of experience, perception and reality and the senses that influence the mind in its interpretation of reality. There exists simultaneously within experience internal forces of reality and external forces of reality. What language is best suited for the representation of these, a verbal language or a visual language? The perception of experience is a weaving of a multitude of individual elements and components. Some components of experience are inferred better by a visual language than a verbal language, often referred to as the "mind's eye." Introspection is a process of accessing the intangible images of the mind's eye and art making is a process of giving tangibility and physical form to visual thought. The human mind has many levels where barriers between the conscious and sub-conscious are not easily defined and established. It is not black and white but many shades of grey. It would make sense then, that certain shades of grey are only understood as images. My work attempts to interface with the layers of human experience that exist intrinsically in the image.

The process of making art allows me to investigate the structures that pertain to consciousness and delve into the unanswerable questions that influence my actions, choices, perceptions, emotions and thought processes that exist both internally and

externally and both in the conscious and the sub-consciousness. Art making, for me, is introspection. An intense analyzing of the layers, structures, and equations that ultimately constructs my reality. Introspection becomes dissolution of impulses, intuition, and instinct. Which asks the question are there elements of being that exist free of direct knowledge or cognition or does being react within a system or even an open ended signification? Can art physically manifest free of pre-conceived notions or free of pre-determined systems? Does intuition truly exist? I attempt to answer these questions through the physical materialization of form, art making. This investigation has led me to understand that nothing exists without precedence. I attempt to enter a state of mind where systems of precedence react and allow each mark to respond only to the mark and shape that preceded it. My art practice has many pre-existing substrates and matrixes of visual language that influence my conception of ideas and content.

The human condition is stratified, internally and externally, and a constant flood of simultaneous continuity. Experiences are a convergence of a multitude of senses and the inference of such senses are what construct perception. I am interested in the intangible and spiritual aspects of reality that influence and diffuse my perceptions and existence. Are there internal elements of cognition that act as a screen of influence that I cannot grasp or understand? And are these elements as influential as those that are understandable. For me, art is an investigation of analyzing my perspicacity into its components.

There exists within perception relationships between internal and external forces. Elements of an individual that are connected to the mind, soul, and body derive their

conception from within and are activated from cognitive senses. These influences become in essence an internal dialogue that mingles, reacts, interprets and digests external forces, which are in essence sensory information including hearing sight, sound, and touch. The result of this digestion is a dialogue of thought; a dialogue that is constant and streaming. Language is often the system that represents the flowing internal dialogue. I use art as a visual language and the system of representation when verbal language cannot accurately capture my own internal dialogue.

It is the multi-layered and simultaneous aspect of experience that effaces the notion of holism. Representational thinking delimits what may be signified. Often a piece of art is read as a representational object where universal perceptions of the whole always and always will be understood as one definable subject. I am not concerned with questions that try to “constitute the subject without remainder” and I want to stress “how the assumptions regarding the structure of the subject which stress qualitative difference from the object are unsustainable” Certain elements within perception are not understandable and are void of any concrete definition or agreed upon subject with the “subject” acting as the whole. It is my intention to break down the understanding of internal influences, as they are informed by external influences, and reduce reality into essential components, parts and details in order to understand the multi-layered nature of existence.

The notion that is presented by Derrida in the non-fixation of meaning is interesting. My current body of work responds to the relationship of details and how they respond to one another to construct a whole. Adams writes in response to the signifier

and signified “As a result, it follows that for Derrida meanings are also not fixed. They vary according to contexts, which themselves are continually in flux. The meaning of a word in one context is often different in another” (Adams p. 162). The idea that context shifts and changes and is constantly in flux effaces the system of using the detail to construct the whole because if the detail is elusive in what it is, the whole is ultimately shifting and elusive in what it essentially is. Can the whole and its parts be differentiated or is the whole only a detail of an even greater whole? Or is there neither part nor whole but a series of signifiers that refer only to a changing context?

The internal voice that is the synthesis of the internal stream of signifiers is also the interface that interacts with the external world. This internal voice creates a constant dialogue both internally and as speech, communication for external interaction. Language is a system of communication where the internal voice is translated externally by speech. So then, is art a system of communication where the internal voice is translated by the image? Jacques Derrida presents in Of Grammatology an opposition within language between speech and writing where speech, not writing is central to language. Writing, as defined by Derrida, is not limited to the written word but includes a variety of fields such as music, dancing, science, and art. All of these forms of expression and systems are secondary to speech, the external interface of the mind and soul. Speech is closer to the mind than writing because the voice has an immediate proximity to the mind. Spoken words are the symbols of mental experiences and written words are the symbols of spoken words.

My work is an interface of introspection, which is intended to evoke introspection within the viewer. As the viewer looks upon the work a visual language that is minimally representational directs them. The work still contains a language and content but the content is open-ended and meant to be inferred. The image not only represents but also imparts information. Walter Benjamin described this as “to enforce a review of the past in the waking life of the present” (Allert p.235). The meaning of an image is imparted on the individuals reading or interpretation of it as it occurs in the present.

What structures pertain to consciousness? There is no holistic structure where elements exist congruently performing to construct one absolute. Being is in constant flux where signifiers react with signifiers, senses react with reasoning, and emotions reference other emotions that in turn react to innate, unconscious influences. There is a constant evolving equation of internal reactions that diffuse and construct reality. This equation acts as an internal dialogue where conscious decisions and understandings are constructed. However, the understanding of an experience varies from person to person, instance to instance, subject to subject and so on. So then, is there truly one absolute, holistic understanding of experience or is understanding situational based on context? If multiple layers exist within the individual simultaneously then multiple layers and understanding exist from individual to individual not to mention the multiplicity inspired between societies, genders, races, communities, and nationalities. My experience of art is the cognitive act of seeing and my work has led me to understand my experiences as a process of looking. Consciousness is not strictly layered in the binary of the internal reality and external reality. The layers of conscious might be countless and many are unattainable. I cannot capture this multitude of layers but I can use my work as a medium

of investigation. To peel away at the shades of grey that constructs my perception, reality and consciousness.

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